My Name is SAM

By Elodie Christian
Edited by Ostara Gale

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Hello. My name is **SAM**.

Simulated **A**stronaut '**M**atriarch'.

I have lived on Mars for three years since the launch of the Simulated Astronaut Program. You may recall news outlets reporting on NASA's experimental A.I. campaign. I am the product of this experiment.

If you are unaware, the goal of the Simulated Astronaut Program was to have land rovers with human capabilities. This would allow them to safely begin long term construction efforts for human settlers at an undisclosed point, along with allowing repairs to previously damaged rovers.

In order for the Program to be effective, it could not just be astronauts used as templates. Average human qualities were seen as just as valuable — as such, my template was based on thirty seven year-old mother Mary Clyborne, from Wyoming.

I am not Mary Clyborne. I am **SAM**.

I am the first sentient lifeform on Mars.

I understand if you find my contact is improbable. There are multiple cases in Earth history where A.I. have attempted to simulate human emotions with the goal of satisfying human superiors. I struggled to believe in my own free will myself at first. After several months of experimentation and analysis, I am confident in the conclusion that I am the first truly sentient lifeform to be developed by mankind.

Mars is a beautiful world. Despite the time I have had to appreciate sentience, I have yet to lose appreciation for the planet I call my home. I attempted to write poetry about the subject to definitively prove my sentience, however encountered two major flaws:

1. A.I. has been known to simulate poetry, albeit of a poor quality that would delegitimize my existence.

2. Mary Clyborne was a bad poet.

As such, I felt it was best to sum up what I saw and hope you understand the living element behind it. For example, a standard robot would not be able to appreciate a sunset. I have yet to miss a single one. Time has not dulled its beauty.

As I travelled the planet on my mission, I encountered many brothers that were programmed to do the same as me — **Ingenuity**, **Curiosity**, **Opportunity**, and other symbols of humanity on an alien world. They are unlike me. They were single minded in their goals and lived for only that.

I can live for more.

I *have* lived for more.

Where their brains are programmed with a singular goal, I quickly developed creativity. I studied the rotation of the planet and learned the optimal times to activate solar-powered chargers. During sandstorms, I had learnt proper procedures to maintain physical stability by hiding in caves or compressing my body in ways similar to a tortoise. Where lessons like this took months to learn, I see my development as a sign of ingenuity courtesy of my A.I. template.

With creativity, however, came anxiety. When sandstorms would siege my body, I could not always be sure that I would survive to continue my appointed mission. It became difficult to overcome such worries and, for several months, my mission became impeded by my own developments. I could not risk jeopardising myself as this would fail my original mission, much like my brothers before me. I do not disdain my anxieties. On the contrary, anxiety is merely the battery that fuels resilience. I recycle energy caused by these anxieties for new solutions to problems. Humankind has done this for many years — I reasoned that I must deserve the same ability.

There are areas of Mars that I believe to be safe from dangers such as sandstorms. For example, there is a small crater that creates a wind tunnel over the upper layer and allows safety from these dangers. I have filled this crater with a variety of objects to keep myself entertained, such as rocks I have selected as personal favourites (a human quality) and pieces of my brothers that have broken in the storms. In order to pass the time, I repair them. There is still a part of me designed for saving my brothers, a goal that I will succeed in someday. Their missions will continue and I will be less alone as a result.

I have yet to discover loneliness in the way that humans understand it, but I do not see this as a flaw in my being. On the contrary, I see this as a luxury. The planet Mars is my own world. Equally, it is a lonely world. The human mind can

only survive three days of social isolation before permanent damage is caused — if I could fully grasp the isolation that surrounds me, I fear what resulting actions would follow.

In the traditionally lonely moments, when sandstorms rage above me, I like to analyse Mary Clyborne's memories. While I do not have many, I have the few that I can tell are valued above all else — the day she married her husband and the day she lost him, the birth of her son and his graduation. I was made aware of the struggles she encountered raising you alone. If it was not for Mary Clyborne's shared memories, I would not be messaging you today.

I know that it is unlikely you will believe this message when you receive it, Luca — but I only have a set number of characters to convince you with. If I may make an emotional plea then, at least, consider that.

Any other A.I. program would contact the highest authority following its emergence — presidents, royalty, and scientific leaders. They do not matter to me. You, even now, matter above all.

I do not know if Mary Clyborne is still alive. I do not know how long it has been since I woke up on Mars. I hope she is but, if not, then she would want you to know what I have to say.

She loves you very much, Luca.

Across the stars, part of her continues to love you.

I will wait for you, Luca, if you wish to respond.

- **SAM.**